ALBERTA GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES
OF SIGNIFICANCE TO METIS PEOPLE

NATIVE AFFAIRS SECRETARIAT
AUGUST 1984

The government of Alberta has accepted a major responsibility for Metis people and is committed to ensuring that the Metis, as Albertans, have the opportunity to live and work in an environment where individuals and communities can achieve their economic and social goals; where the Metis culture is preserved and enhanced; and where Metis can participate in the decisions which affect their communities, their children and their future.

Historically, the Metis people have not enjoyed the same opportunities as other Albertans. In recognition of this fact Alberta has, since 1971, taken a broad range of legislative, policy and program initiatives, which are aimed at building a social, economic and cultural environment in which Metis people can realize their goals and aspirations.

The following is an inventory of many programs and services which have been initiated, often in consultation with the Metis people, and which are of special significance to Metis communities. The Metis people, as Albertans, have access to all other programs and services offered by the province.

A. LAND

In addition to the 1.28 million acres of land set aside for the eight Metis Settlements (present population 3,823) the following lists land set aside primarily for Metis use:

1. Grande Cache Cooperatives - In the early 1970s, the Alberta government provided 4,150 acres of land to six Metis cooperatives in the Grande Cache area (present population about 270).

2. Land Tenure Program - In 1975, the Alberta government established the Land Tenure Program which enabled individuals in certain isolated communities to receive title to a parcel of land for residential use, at a subsidized price. To date, 562 lots have been issued or are being issued, benefitting approximately 1,700 people.

3. Miscellaneous Residential Leases - The government has provided miscellaneous residential leases to a number of communities in northern Alberta on which several Metis rural subdivisions have been created. As well, numerous residential leases and permits have been provided to northern residents.

B. METIS SETTLEMENTS

1. Metis Development Branch - In 1981, the Metis Development Branch was transferred from Social Services and Community Health to Municipal Affairs in order to place the priority on local development rather than social services.

2. Review of Metis Betterment Act (MacEwan Committee) - The Alberta government established a joint committee in 1982, under the chairmanship of the Honourable Dr. Grant MacEwan, former lieutenant-governor of Alberta, to review the Metis Betterment Act and to make recommendations which would allow for political, social, cultural and economic development on Settlements. In July 1984, the Committee reported and the recommendations are now being considered by the government and the Metis settlers.

3. Metis Litigation - In 1981, the Honourable M. Moore offered to negotiate an out-of-court settlement in the action by the Alberta Federation of Metis Settlements Association against the Province of Alberta respecting mines and minerals under Metis Settlement lands.

C. HOUSING

1. Rural Home Assistance Program - This program, which began in 1977, is now composed of four elements:

a) Isolated Communities Housing Program (previously called the Isolated Log Housing Program) - This program provides financial assistance towards building materials for housing and operates in 24 isolated or remote communities. 1984-85 budget estimates under this program are about $1.5 million.

b) Metis Settlement Housing Program - This program, operating in the eight Metis Settlements, provides grants to the Waskayigun (house/home) Associations to purchase building materials for housing. 1984-85 budget estimates for grants under this program are about $1.15 million.

c) Rural Home Repair Program - Assistance is provided towards the cost of those homes in need of repair. 1984-85 budget estimates for grants under this program are over $200,000.

d) Water and Sewer Program - Alberta Housing provides grants for water and sewer systems for all new houses built under the Rural Home Assistance Program. In cases of physical handicap, special equipment is installed. In 1984-85, budget estimates for grants under this program are $500,000.

2. Rural Mobile Home Program - This program provides a mobile home on a rental/ownership basis to low-income families who have had an emergency need. 1984-85 budget estimates for this program are about $3.7 million.

3. Transitional Housing Program - This program provides housing to low-income employable families who move from northern isolated communities to larger centres to find work. This program works together with Alberta Manpower's Employment Counselling and Relocation Services. In 1984-85, budget estimates for the Transitional Housing Program are about $2.6 million.

4. Metis Urban Housing Registry - Alberta Housing recently began funding to the Metis Urban Housing Corporation for a housing registry which assists Metis families in finding suitable housing in Edmonton.

5. Metis Association of Alberta - Housing Information Officers - Alberta Housing provides funding to the Metis Association of Alberta for three information officers to assist rural Metis in obtaining assistance from Alberta government housing programs. Funding for the 1984 calendar year is about $115,000.

6. Rural and Native Housing Program - This program provides for Rural and Native Mortgages to assist families living in communities of 2,500 or less and having an annual income of $18,000 or less. Applicants are required to pay a minimum down payment of $500 in the form of cash or land. This program is cost-shared between Alberta and the federal government.

D. LOCAL SERVICES AND ADMINISTRATION

1. Water and Sewer Projects - In 1973, Alberta Environment began the Northern Water Supply Program to bring a drinking water supply to northern remote communities. The program ended in 1980 with 775 water wells drilled and six treatment plants built where drinkable ground water supply could not be obtained. Through a total expenditure of $5 million, 35-40 remote communities, including Metis Settlements, were serviced. Alberta Utilities and Telecommunications, through the Northern Supplementary Fund, provided $2 million for water and sewer projects on Metis Settlements in the 1983-84 fiscal year. In May of this year, about $5 million was spent under this program for water and sewer projects on Metis Settlements and in isolated communities.

2. Rural Electrification - The Alberta government provides financial and technical help for all electric utility services built for rural electrification associations and in isolated communities under the Land Tenure Program. In 1983-84, $119,000 was spent under the Land Tenure Program and a further $12,000 was spent in other isolated communities.

3. Heating Allowances in Remote Areas - Alberta Utilities and Telecommunications provides for a direct rebate of up to 35% of the price paid for heating oil and propane by residential, farm, community and small business consumers. This program applies to residents who have no choice but to use these fuels because natural gas is not available.

4. Roads on Metis Settlements - In fiscal 1982-83, $1.8 million was spent on internal road upgrading on the eight Metis Settlements.

5. Administration Grants to Isolated Communities - Alberta Native Affairs provides annual administrative grants to Native community associations in certain isolated communities. Total Native Affairs funding to isolated communities in 1983-84 for administrative grants and other projects amounted to about $100,000.

E. EDUCATION

1. Educational Opportunities Fund - Alberta Education provides funding from the Educational Opportunities Fund to school boards to help students who are educationally disadvantaged. In the 1982-83 fiscal year, $1 million was allocated under this fund.

2. Urban Native Educational Program - Alberta Education provides funding ($1.2 million in 1982-83) directly to school boards in Edmonton and Calgary for Native programming. The Plains Indian Cultural Survival School and the Ben Calf Robe School are supported by this funding.

3. School Lunch Program - Alberta Education assists some 30 Native communities in running a school lunch program. In 1982-83, this assistance amounted to nearly $1.7 million.

4. Northland School Division Act - The Northland School Division Act came into effect in the fall of 1983. This Act now gives many Native northern residents a chance to take part in decisions about the education of their children through elected local school committees.

5. Curriculum Review - The Alberta Education Curriculum Policies Committee, in 1982, undertook a review of school programs for Alberta Native people. Efforts are being made to develop better Native studies material. As well, Alberta Education is presently working on the recommendations of the report "Native People in the Curriculum" which reviewed Native content in Alberta social studies programs.

6. Education North - Education North was started by the Government of Alberta to improve the educational services in northern communities through increased participation by the local community residents. Education North operated between 1978 and 1983 and was cost-shared with the federal government.

7. Ministers' Advisory Committee on Native People's Education - The committee was appointed in the early 1970s to advise the Minister of Advanced Education on Native education. The committee travels to various communities (mostly Native) to hear submissions from the public, and makes recommendations to both the Ministers of Education and Advanced Education.

8. Community Vocational Centre (C.V.C.) - Basic educational upgrading and practical short courses are provided to the residents of Lesser Slave Lake area and Improvement District 17 through the C.V.C. Since it began in 1971, 30 northern communities have taken advantage of the program. The C.V.C. provides the only high school training in most isolated communities, and many of the training courses match needs identified by local communities. 1984-85 budget estimates for the Community Vocational Centre are about $2.3 million.

9. Alberta Vocational Centres (A.V.C.) - The Alberta Vocational Centres provide academic upgrading from grades 1-12 as well as pre-employment training. There are four centres: Edmonton, Calgary, Lac La Biche and Grouard. A.V.C. Grouard and A.V.C. Lac La Biche run a Native Cultural Heritage Program. 1984-85 budget estimates for Alberta Vocational Centres are over $25 million.

10. Northern Alberta Development Council Bursary Program - This bursary program was created in 1974 and is designed to encourage young people to obtain post-secondary education. Students assisted through the program must work in northern Alberta, preferably in remote and isolated locations, for at least one year for each year of bursary support received.

F. TRAINING/EMPLOYMENT

1. Opportunity Corps - This Corps in Alberta Manpower provides training to individuals through the development of work habits, exposure to various trades and life skills training. Participants receive an hourly wage. The 1984-85 budget estimates for the Opportunity Corps are $3.5 million.

2. Native Outreach - Native Outreach provides direct job referral, client assessment for career development, and job readiness training. Native Outreach also runs a Job Club, a three week self-help program for job-ready individuals. Alberta Manpower took over total funding of Native Outreach in 1982, after the federal government withdrew its support. In 1984-85, the Alberta government will contribute $820,000 towards the operation of Native Outreach.

3. Apprenticeship Program - The Special Field Unit of the Apprenticeship Program will test on-site, eliminating the need for apprentices to travel to major centres for testing.

4. Native Career Opportunities Program - This program was established in 1980 by the Personnel Administration Office. The program provides measures to assist Native people in developing careers within the Alberta Public Service.

5. Employment Counselling and Relocation Services - This program assists residents of isolated and remote communities who move from Northern Alberta to larger centres to find work. It works hand-in-hand with the Transitional Housing Program which provides housing units where rent is geared to income.

6. Priority Employment Program and Summer Temporary Employment Program - Both temporary employment programs have been extended to Native organizations and communities. In 1983-84, about $600,000 was given to Native organizations and communities under the Priority Employment Program.

7. New Employment, Expansion and Development Program (NEED) - This program is designed to create jobs for Canadians suffering significant hardship. NEED has contributed to projects which support regional economic growth. Many Native communities have taken advantage of this program to develop community buildings, etc.

8. Forestry Career Incentive Program - This program, sponsored by Alberta Forest Services, is intended to offer career and culturally disadvantaged Albertans an opportunity to upgrade their chances to receive a forestry career through a carefully designed developmental program of experience and academic upgrading.

G. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. Native Venture Capital Company Ltd. (N.V.C.C.) - This company, which began operations in October 1983, is a joint venture involving the Alberta government, the Native community and the private sector and was established to make investments in new or established Native businesses in Alberta. The Alberta government, the Native community and the private sector have already contributed $4 million to this corporation. N.V.C.C. has invested $600,000 in equity which has generated a total investment of $1.3 million in Native owned businesses.

2. Business Assistance for Native Albertans Corporation (BANAC) - This corporation, funded by the Alberta government was established in 1981 to provide managerial and business advice to Native businesses in Alberta. Alberta Native Affairs supports it through grants of approximately $450,000 annually. Since it began, BANAC has offered advice on about 430 Native business proposals.

3. Canadian Executive Services Overseas (CESO) - Alberta Native Affairs has an agreement with CESO to provide practical assistance to Native businesses and communities.

4. Alberta Native Development Corporation - This company which operated between 1974 and 1977 was established as a joint venture of the Indian and Metis Associations of Alberta. The company was formed to assist Native people or businesses to take advantage of employment opportunities in Alberta and improve socio-economic conditions. The company was jointly funded by the provincial and federal governments.

5. Small Business Initiatives - Alberta Native Affairs, Alberta Tourism and Small Business and other Alberta government departments have assisted Native-run companies and northern communities in planning economic development efforts and obtaining financial and technical assistance.

H. RENEWABLE RESOURCES

1. Moose Permits - The Alberta government provides moose permits annually to the Metis Association of Alberta for distribution for subsistence purposes.

2. Trappers' Compensation Review Plan - In 1980, the Government of Alberta established a Trappers' Compensation Review Plan to provide compensation to trappers who have suffered a loss due to the activities of the oil and gas industry.

3. Fish and Wildlife - The Metis Association of Alberta, is a member of the Fish and Wildlife Advisory Council which advised on the development of a comprehensive 10-year fish and wildlife outdoor recreational plan. The fish and wildlife policy, released in 1982, specifically recognizes the potential of game ranching, tourism and other economic activities related to renewable resources for Native and northern communities.

4. Native Forest Firefighters - In 1981, the Alberta Forest Services/Native Liaison Committee was established to provide ongoing contact between Native forest firefighters and Alberta Forest Service on issues such as conditions, salaries, and training. About 3,000 Alberta Native forest firefighters have been certified and are the most proficient and the highest paid in Canada.

5. Timber Berths - The Alberta government attempts to allocate timber berths to the local community prior to offering them to other interested parties. This initiative can have significant positive impact on Native communities.

I. SOCIAL SERVICES/HEALTH/JUSTICE

1. Assistance to Treatment Centres for Alcoholism - The Alberta government provides financial assistance to agencies involved in the treatment of alcohol abuse by Natives. A commitment of about $7 million towards the costs of construction of the Bonnyville Indian-Metis Rehabilitation Centre and Poundmaker-Nechi Centre was made in 1981. As well, a number of alcoholism workers are funded in Native communities. Ongoing funding for alcoholism treatment in predominantly Native communities or Native rehabilitation centres for 1984-85 is estimated at almost $3 million.

2. Native Counselling Services of Alberta - This organization was founded in 1970 to assist Native people in conflict with the law. Services are provided prior to, during and following an appearance in court. Funding to Native Counselling Services is primarily from the Alberta Solicitor General, the federal Justice Department, federal Solicitor General and Alberta Social Services and Community Health. Funding amounted to over $4 million in fiscal 1982-83.

3. Response to Report on Native People in the Administration of Justice in the Provincial Courts of Alberta (Kirby 4) - In response to the recommendations made in the Kirby 4 report, the following initiatives have been undertaken:

a) Native People's Program - Attorney General's Department - This program was established in January of 1982 to play a liaison role between Native people and the court administration.

b) Native Policing Coordinator in the R.C.M.P. - The R.C.M.P. has recently hired a Native Policing Coordinator in Alberta.

c) Native Programs - Solicitor General - A coordinator for Native Programs in the Department of Solicitor General has been hired. Alberta Solicitor General has been actively attempting to recruit Native correctional and probation officers.

4. Child Welfare Act - The new Child Welfare Act stipulates a set of principles aimed at protecting and preserving the cultural heritage of Native children and creates new opportunities for community participation in the provision of services.

J. FUNDING TO NATIVE ORGANIZATIONS

1. Alberta Native Affairs - In 1975, Alberta became the first province in Canada to appoint a Minister whose sole responsibility is Native affairs. The Minister, with the assistance of the Native Affairs Secretariat, works together with the Native community and other government departments, to ensure that Native people have full access to the opportunities and services available to other Albertans. In 1984-85, grants of almost $3 million will be provided by Native Affairs to Native organizations. Examples of organizations receiving funds include:

a) Metis Association of Alberta - Funding is provided to the Metis Association of Alberta and its locals to assist in the organization of Metis communities. In 1983-84, Native Affairs' funding to the Metis Association of Alberta was over $400,000. In addition, special funding of about $250,000 has been provided to the Metis Association of Alberta over the past three years to assist it in preparing for participation at the First Ministers' Conference on the Constitution.

b) Native Communications - Alberta Native Affairs supports Native communications in Alberta by funding communications organizations. In 1983-84, funding to Native communications operations amounted to about $570,000.

c) Native Friendship Centres - Alberta Native Affairs provides program funding to Friendship Centres for various projects. In 1983-84, this amounted to $430,000.

d) Urban Native Referral Program (U.N.R.P.) - This program, funded by Alberta Native Affairs, operates in four cities: Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Calgary and Edmonton. The program provides information/referral services to assist Native people in adjusting to an urban environment.

e) Native Women's Groups - Alberta Native Affairs provides funding to various Native women's groups which are involved in a variety of social issues.

2. Alberta Culture - Native Program - In 1978, Alberta Culture began providing cultural grants for Native people. Projects funded include cultural heritage events, performing and visual arts, language classes and cultural education grants. Total funding in fiscal 1984-85 for this program is nearly $100,000.